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ABSTRACT

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national network of 16 specialized clearinghouses and several central ERIC service facilities, each of which is charged with enhancing the ERIC database of educational resources by identifying hard-to-find materials including research reports, curriculum guides, conference papers, project/program reviews, and government reports. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) collects, evaluates, and disseminates educational information related to research, instruction, and personnel preparation at all levels and in all institutions, including documents on all aspects of reading and writing, English, journalism and mass communications, and speech and theater. ERIC/RCS also synthesizes and analyzes selected information from the database. Among the many products now available from ERIC/RCS are digests, FAST bibliographies, minibibliographies, and monographs. ERIC users play an important role in the identification of topics for future ERIC/RCS publications, and most of the authors are ERIC users. ERIC/RCS has a packet of descriptive literature about the ERIC system, and brochures and order forms for ERIC products and publications are available upon request. (RS)

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Overview: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

ERIC/RCS

White Paper No. 1 (1990)

An Overview of the

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communications Skills

Presented to Indiana Reading Professors, IRA State Conference

March 29, 1990

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For distribution to

Federal, State, and Local Government Officials

and

Representatives of Selected Not-for-profit Literacy Groups

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An Overview of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communications Skills

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills is located at Indiana University in Bloomington. Known by the acronymn ERIC/RCS, the Clearinghouse is now in its third year of operation in Bloomington. We have found that many people nod their heads when we mention ERIC, indicating that they are familiar with ERIC. However, they often do not know what ERIC is or what role the ERIC system can play in contemporary education. Since ERIC resources are readily accessible to most people, we have prepared this white paper for your perusal. In the paragraphs below, we briefly describe the ERIC system, the RCS Clearinghouse, some of the publications and products we offer, and the user's role in ERIC activities.

What is ERIC?

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national network of 16 specialized Clearinghouses and several central ERIC service facilities each of which is charged with enhancing the ERIC database of educational resources by identifying hard to find materials including research reports, curriculum guides, conference papers, project/program reviews, and government reports. ERIC is currently sponsored by the Office for Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education.

Overview: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

Since its inception in 1966, the ERIC system has served millions of researchers, teachers, students, supervisors, administrators, other policy makers, and citizens concerned with the quality of education. The system has created, maintained, and developed an ever-enlarging database now numbering almost 750,000 references. Each ERIC citation is carefully classified with numerous descriptors from one of the most scrupulously organized controlled vocabularies ever developed in any discipline.

After obtaining documents, ERIC staff write abstracts or annotations for each item. These annotations are entered into a database and published in the monthly publication, Resources in Education (RIE), which includes detailed bibliographic information. A companion publication, also published monthly, is Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). CIJE includes brief abstracts of relevant papers published in a large number of professional journals. All citations in the database contain full bibliographic information as well as extensive descriptors and identifiers to aid in document location and retrieval.

Not only are these materials published in RIE and CIJE, the entries are also accessible through several online computer databases (e.g., BRS Information Technologies, Dialog Information Services, and Orbit Search Service) and optical CD-ROM disk technologies (e.g., Dialog Information Services, OCLC, and SilverPlatter Information Services). State-of-the-art searching

techniques exploit the ERIC descriptors and, in seconds, the full abstracts of documents relevant to the user's need can be selected from the collection.

What is the scope area of RCS?

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills has a carefully defined scope for monitoring the developing literature relevant to education. Each of the sixteen Clearinghouses is responsible for contributing materials to the database in its scope area. Table 1 lists the Clearinghouses and provides a brief description of each.

ERIC/RCS collects, evaluates, and disseminates educational information related to research, instruction, and personnel preparation at all levels and in all institutions, including documents on all aspects of reading and writing, English, journalism and mass communications, and speech and theater.

Reading and writing documents cover all aspects of reading behavior with emphasis on psychology, sociology, teaching, and physiology; diagnostic and remedial services; the reading and writing relationship; writing across the curriculum; the role of libraries; and preparation of reading professionals and specialists.

Overview: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

English documents include those which convey information related to teaching and learning the English language and literature, both as a symbol system and as a vehicle for all forms speaking and genres of writing.

Journalism and mass communication documents include public relations, school publications programs, newspaper and magazine publication, and

Speech and theater documents cover all educational information related to radio, film, and TV; forensics; interpersonal and small-group interaction; theater; oral interpretation; rhetorical and communication theory; public address; and the speech sciences.

What does ERIC/RCS offer to you?

Publications and Products. In addition to its major responsibility to maintain and expand the ERIC database, RCS also synthesizes and analyzes selected information from it. This is done to exemplify some of the many ways the database can serve particular audiences. The RCS staff tracks highly significant trends and issues within the scope of the Clearinghouse, assisted by the wide network of ERIC's users and a large group of participating specialists and experts. All units within the ERIC system produce numerous publications to promote and facilitate the

use of the system. Among the many products now available from RCS are Digests, FAST Bibliographies, Minibibliographies, and Monographs.

Digests. ERIC/RCS produces a series of topical analysis/synthesis papers in the ERIC/RCS Digest series. In addition to the ten new titles issued each year, a large supply of back issues is currently available. Among the available digest titles are: "How Well Do Tests Measure Real Reading?" "Teaching Poetry," "Communication Apprehension: The Quiet Child in the Classroom," "Teaching Children to Appreciate Literature," and "How to 'Read' Television: Teaching Students to View TV Critically."

FAST Bibliographies. RCS started a new bibliography series called ERIC/RCS FAST Bibliographies. FAST is an acronym for Focused Access to Selected Topics. FAST Bibliographies cite 20 to 30 sources in the ERIC database and include annotations. Among the 40 FAST Bibs produced so far are "Religious Broadcasting" (No. 7), "Reading and the Elderly" (No. 18), "Interviewing: Communication Strategies" (No. 23), "Adult Literacy" (Nos. 31 and 32), and "Writing Apprehension" (No. 33).

Minibibliographies. At the present time, ERIC/RCS has a backlog of earlier Minibibliographies available. Each Minibibliography is on a topic of interest to practitioners of reading and the other communication skills. Each offers six

citations with abstracts from the ERIC database. Among the titles available are "Censorship Issues in Society and School," "Intercultural Communication," "Phonics and Reading," and "Technical Writing."

To acquire an order sheet for Digests, FAST Bibliographies, and Minibibliographies, or to request any of the titles, write to ERIC/RCS User Services, Smith Research Center Rm. 150, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698 or call (812) 855-5847 or use your computer and modem to access EDINFO, our online ERIC information center. Digests, FAST BIBS, and Minibibliographies are sent to you at no cost except a small postage and handling charge.

Monographs. ERIC/RCS also publishes monographs. These are sometimes co-published with another Clearinghouse or professional organization. Three monographs in the Teaching Critical Thinking Series, co-published with the National Council of Teachers of English, are available for $5.95 each: Critical Thinking: A Semiotic Perspective by Marjorie Siegel and Robert F. Carey (No. 1), Critical Thinking and Reading: Empowering Learners to Think and Act by Allan R. Neilsen (No. 2), and Critical Thinking and Writing: Reclaiming the Essay by Thomas Newkirk (No. 3). The ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education and RCS are cooperating in the distribution of a monograph developed by the Teacher Education Clearinghouse. How Do Teachers Communicate? A Review and Critique of Assessment Practices, edited by Joseph L. McCaleb, treats topics

including teacher communication competencies, assessment issues, and the range of definitions used in the communications fields. This monograph is available at a cost of $9.50.

Together with the International Reading Association, we have produced a series of booklets for parents: Beginning Literacy and Your Child by Steven and Linda Silvern and You Can Encourage Your High School Student to Read by Jamie Myers are two available titles in this series. The TRIED series (Teaching Resources in the ERIC Database) includes Teaching the Novel, Writing Across the Social Studies Curriculum, and Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing. These and future volumes in this series contain lesson plans derived from the rich collection of materials in the ERIC database.

User Services. Many requests received by ERIC/RCS can be answered with existing publications, most of which are provided at minimal expense to you. More complex inquiries and highly specific requests can be met through a customized database search. These searches are undertaken by a specialist at a cost of $20.00 for the first fifty citations with abstracts. If you have access to a facility where a search can be conducted, such as a local college or university library, a large public library, or a state library, our User Services Specialist can help you design your own search.

What is the Role of the User at ERIC/RCS?

Expansion of the ERIC database depends on a nationwide network of teachers, administrators, professors, researchers, specialists in local, state, and federal government agencies, school board members, media specialists, librarians, students and their parents, numerous other educational practitioners, and other professionals. Many of the documents abstracted in the ERIC database are submitted by you, your professional colleagues, and various agencies and professional organizations. If you have a document that falls into its scope area, ERIC/RCS would appreciate the opportunity to examine the document for possible inclusion in the database. All documents are evaluated by members of the RCS Subject Area Panel, a group of over 150 reviewers selected for their expertise in the various areas of the RCS scope.

Many different types of documents are appropriate for submission, review, and indexing. Documents such as research reports, technical reports, opinion papers, position papers, monographs, essays, speeches, evaluation studies, feasibility studies, syllabuses, teaching guides, resource guides, handbooks, manuals, conference papers, bibliographies and annotated bibliographies, legislation and regulations, instructional and curriculum materials, and other materials of limited circulation are all suitable for consideration.

Overview: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

ERIC/RCS gathers documents from individuals in all disciples related to Reading and Communication. Organizations, including professional associations, state and local government agencies, educational institutions, and the media all contribute documents to the ERIC database through ERIC/RCS or one of the other fifteen Clearinghouses. ERIC/RCS currently scans over 60 journals and other publications for relevant articles and reports. Brief abstracts from journals are included in CIJE. RIE, the companion volume to CIJE, contains longer abstracts of documents including research reports, conference presentations, speeches, curriculum documents, and government reports.

The ERIC database is among the largest and most often searched bibliographic database in the world. Not only does the ERIC database contain over 750,000 citations, but it is accessible at over 800 locations throughout the world.

What Can You Do for ERIC/RCS?

ERIC users play an important role in the identification of topics for future RCS publications; and most of the authors are ERIC users. If you see a need for the synthesis and analysis of database information on a particular topic, please contact RCS and recommend it. If you are interested in writing for RCS, send a short proposal containing a rationale for the publication and an outline of your idea(s). Alternatively, call us to talk about the

possibility (Phone: (812) 855-5847 or E-mail: BITNET "WWLEWIS@IUBACS").

ERIC/RCS invites you to write or call us for information about our publications, products, and other services. We'll send you a packet of descriptive literature about the ERIC system, brochures and order forms for ERIC products and publications, and we'll add your name on our mailing list as well.

Overview: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

For further details about ERIC, the following references are helpful.

Dunman, S. (1988). ERIC: An essential online tool for educators. Electronic Learning, 7, 45-47.

McLaughlin, P. M. (1987). Steps in using ERIC. Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources. (ERIC Document No. ED 288 528)

Rholes, J. M., and Caldwell-Wood, N. (1987, June). ERIC SilverPlatter: Is it user friendly? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Library Association, San Francisco. (ERIC Document No. ED 286 522)